

Legislation Includes Language to Ensure Veterans are Buried with Dignity and Honor

Washington, DC (September 19, 2012) – The U.S. House of Representatives passed today the Veterans Fiduciary Reform and Honoring Noble Service Act (H.R. 5948), which includes language sponsored by Congressman Gus Bilirakis (FL-09), Vice-Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, to ensure that our Nation's veterans receive proper burial in the absence of next of kin or adequate finances.

"Our Nation's heroes deserve to be buried the same way they served this country – with dignity and honor. By ensuring our veterans receive proper burial upon their passing, we are not only recognizing their brave service to our country, but also the selfless sacrifices our service men and women and their families make to protect the freedoms and values we enjoy as citizens of this great country."

The language was proposed by Bilirakis after it was discovered that Pvt. Lawrence Davis Jr., a World War II veteran with no next of kin, was buried in a cardboard box at Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Fla.

In addition to providing for the proper burial of veterans, the Veterans Fiduciary Reform and Honoring Noble Service Act would require the VA to perform credit and criminal background checks for each fiduciary it appoints, establish an appeals process so that a veteran can appeal should he or she lose confidence in a VA-appointed fiduciary, and allow veterans to appeal their status of financial incompetence.

The VA's Fiduciary Program serves the needs of veterans who are deemed financially incompetent to manage their financial affairs. With the increase in traumatic brain injuries over the past decade and the aging of Vietnam era veterans, the number of veterans and their families whose benefits may be administered by the program is on the rise.

Lack of oversight of the VA's Fiduciary Program has resulted in veterans being denied access to their benefits, veterans and their families having their power turned off after the fiduciary failed to pay the bill, and millions of dollars being stolen from veterans by fiduciaries. For too

long, VA fiduciaries have abused the system and subverted the rights of the veterans they were entrusted to protect, in some cases for personal gain. By reforming this program veterans and their families are able to trust the VA and its agents to act lawfully and ethically on their behalf.

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